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SUBJECT: CZECH COMMENTS ON SEPTEMBER GAERC

REF: PRAGUE 526

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On September 9 and 11 emboff spoke with Czech MFA Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Department Deputy Director Magdalena Janesova in advance of the September 14-15 EU Foreign Ministers' meeting (GAERC). She offered brief comments on Iran, Afghanistan, and the EU's Eastern Partnership as it relates to the Caucasus. End Summary.

Iran - Czechs Unwavering in Skepticism

¶2. (SBU) According to Janesova, the EU Foreign Ministers plan to discuss three items related to Iran - EU concerns about certain Iranian Ministerial appointments, the internal political situation following the June elections (as a subset of this, some European nationals are still being harassed and monitored), and the nuclear issue. With respect to the Ministerial appointments, the EU is particularly concerned about the proposed Defense Minister, Ahmad Vahidi, given that he is currently wanted by Interpol for his terror links. Regarding European nationals, some member states are still having trouble getting their citizens out of Iran. There is apparently one British diplomat who faces charges, while other nationals are being closely monitored. On the nuclear issue, Janesova commented that the Czechs felt that the letter Iran delivered to the P5 1 on September 9 lacked substance and was simply another attempt by Iran to buy time.

As Janesova noted last week (reftel), the Czechs are not optimistic that Iran will have met any of its obligations by the end of September. Czech MFA Political Director Ivo Sramek told POLEC Counselor that the Czechs will urge the EU to continue work on sanctions, even as the EU continues diplomatic engagement, in order to have sanctions ready if diplomacy fails.

Afghanistan

¶3. (SBU) Following up on the Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy paper produced by the European Commission and Council Secretariat and discussed by the Foreign Ministers on September 4 at the Gymnich, Janesova stated that the Commission and Council Secretariat are now working on a consolidated paper. For October, the Czechs believe that the international community needs to be better prepared to assist with the next round of elections, particularly when it comes to monitoring the elections and establishing a secure environment for voters.

Eastern Partnership - Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan

¶4. (SBU) The Swedes have proposed this item for the Foreign Ministers to discuss at the GAERC, and the Czechs heartily

endorsed this. The idea is to enhance relations with these countries and the Czechs would like to see, as an outcome of this meeting, consensus within the EU to move forward with drafting Association Agreements for the Caucasus. Janesova notes that there is some reluctance from certain EU member states to move forward, but she is hopeful that these member states may be brought around to the views of the majority. With respect to visa liberalization for these three countries, she noted that this is a very long way off for the Caucasus and the Czechs are some of the most optimistic within the EU.

AOB - Visa Issues

15. (SBU) Apparently there are relatively minor issues to be raised under Any Other Business (AOB) next week. Janesova flagged for emboff that the Czechs have added the Canadian visa issue. She noted that while ESTA has been discussed in a number of EU fora, it has not been added to the agenda of this GAERC.

Thompson-Jones